

Fairview Elementary School

Building Our Future, One Leader at a Time

March 6th, 2014

On August 20th, 2010, I attended my first workshop on the Common Core State Standards. The aim of the workshop was to deliver a systematic plan of services to lead and support effective district adoption of the Common Core. In the almost four years since then, countless hours have been put in by district leaders to gain an understanding of the Standards and analyze the current methods and pedagogies to ensure that our students could meet these new expectations.

As I stand before you today, I ask myself “why?” Why do educational leaders from around the state have to gather today to defend the work of the last several years? What exactly is wrong with the Common Core? What is wrong with Reading and Literature standard 1.1, which says that first graders should be able to ask and answer questions about key details in a text? What is so atrocious about math standard 4.NF.B.3, which asks 4th graders to understand the addition and subtraction of fractions? If the Common Core State Standards are truly deplorable, and you propose that Wisconsin write their own standards, my question to you is how would they be different? How would they be better?

I have heard opponents to the Common Core say that the cost of implementing the Standards would be too great a burden for districts to bear. However, that argument is without merit, because districts have been working that cost into their budgets for the past 4 years. If implementation cost is truly a concern, you may want to form a committee to explore a reimbursement plan for those districts who are already well into the adoption process.

I have also heard the misconception that the Common Core restricts teacher freedom, removes classic literature from the classroom, and eliminates local control. These hollow arguments only bring to light the ignorance of those who have not read the Standards and also the irresponsible propaganda being spread by those with a financial interest in the game.

In the introduction of the Common Core State Standards, which I read for the first time in 2010, it states, and I quote:

“The standards should be recognized for what they are not as well as what they are...The standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, NOT how teachers should teach. Furthermore, while the standards make reference to some particular forms of content...they do not- indeed, cannot- enumerate all or even most of the content that students should learn. The standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document.”

The introduction continues by saying, and I quote:

“While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught. A great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curriculum developers. The aim of the standards is to ARTICULATE THE FUNDAMENTALS, not set out an exhaustive list or a set of restrictions that limits what can be taught.”

Members of the committee, please believe me when I say that I would much rather be back in Pulaski today, celebrating Read Across America Week with my students. However, I felt the need to come here to advocate for their best interests. I’m not here because I am motivated by money, greed, or a hidden political agenda. I am here because I am motivated by the students of Fairview Elementary School. I believe that they deserve to be held to a higher universal standard. A standard that can be set by the Common Core.

Thank you for your time and your service to our state,

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